

Hebron Massacre

A Summary of Events

Ziad Abbas, Nathan Krystall, Michel Warshawsky

Compiled from reports by: The Alternative Information Center; The Palestine Human Rights Information Center; The Hebron Solidarity Committee; *Al-Quds*; *Yediot Aharonot*; *Ma'ariv*; *Ha'aretz*; *Shishi*; The Jerusalem Post; and The Jerusalem Times

**Published by:
The Alternative Information Center
Jerusalem-Bethlehem
PO Box 31417, Jerusalem
Tel. 02-241159, Fax. 02-253151
E-mail: aic@baraka.gn.apc.org**

I. The Massacre

Two days before Baruch Goldstein slew dozens of Muslim worshippers at al-Ibrahimi's Mosque in Hebron, Israeli Police Inspector-General Rafi Peled warned against an increase in terrorist attacks following the signing of the Cairo Agreement. Needless to say, Peled was referring to 'acts of terror' by Palestinians; Israelis retaliate, occupy, even use 'iron fists' - but terrorize? Never.

When discussing the events in Hebron on February 25, 1994, it is inaccurate to talk of just one massacre, for in fact there were three massacres. The first took place inside al-Haram al-Ibrahimi (Abraham's Mosque); the second outside the mosque; and the third at al-Ahli hospital.

Inside the mosque: Reports about the events differ. At first, the main differences were between the official Israeli versions and the eyewitness accounts of Palestinians. However, the testimony presented to the Israeli commission of inquiry by the Israeli soldiers who were present at the mosque is gradually corroborating much of the Palestinians' version. As far as can be discerned, the main events on the horrible morning of February 25 proceeded as follows.

At 3:30 am, around a dozen Jewish settlers arrived at the Haram, known to them as the Cave of the Patriarchs, for early morning prayer. Between 4 am and 5 am, approximately 1,000 Muslim worshippers entered Ibrahimi Mosque and at 5:15 am, Imam Adel Idris began the prayer. Outside, supposedly guarding the mosque, were four IDF soldiers and an officer, half the usual patrol, according to Israeli sources.

At 5:15 am, Baruch Goldstein, a notorious Kach activist from Kiryat Arba, walked past the soldiers after exchanging greetings with them. Goldstein was wearing his military uniform and carrying a weapon with three or four ammunition clips. Some soldiers say he was carrying an M-16, some a Galil. Also, some soldiers say he had already walked past at 4:30 am. The soldiers' accounts about which entrance he entered from also conflict. The soldiers also say that Goldstein was accompanied by two people: an unarmed man who is a regular Jewish worshipper at the mosque (known to Jews as the Cave of the Patriarchs) and an armed man, unfamiliar to the soldiers.

The unarmed Palestinian guard at the entrance to the Mosque, Suleiman Abu Saleh, tried to prevent Goldstein from entering. "He said he was the officer in charge that night," Abu Saleh said, "but I still prevented him from entering because it's forbidden for soldiers to enter the mosque during prayer. He hit me on my chest with his rifle and entered by force after I had fallen on the ground."

Upon entering the mosque, Goldstein immediately began shooting at the worshippers, changing the clip of his weapon at least once. At least 30 people were killed inside the mosque, and several hundred wounded.

Many affidavits taken from survivors of the mosque massacre report that at least one other settler was shooting inside the mosque. Some report at least one other person, in addition to Goldstein, wearing military uniform firing inside the mosque. After a couple of minutes, worshippers overcame Goldstein and killed him.

One of the worshippers in the mosque later said, "The attack could not have been worse. It came on one of the holiest days of the year, a Ramadan Friday, in the holiest spot - the Ibrahimi Mosque - at the holiest point in the prayer service, as worshippers were fully prostrated in the direction of Mecca."

Many Hebron families suffered multiple losses in the massacre. Seven of the martyrs were from the Abu-Sneineh family, one of Hebron's largest.

Outside the mosque: Afterwards, at 5:20 am, when worshippers began to rush out of the mosque, IDF

soldiers shot in the air and at the worshippers, killing several of them.

At 5:40 am, the first of the injured was taken to al-Ahli Hospital in a private car. It was only at 6:10 am that the first ambulance arrived at the mosque to evacuate the wounded. After shooting directly at those people who were trying to flee and carry out others who were injured, the soldiers carried out other actions that delayed the speedy evacuation of the wounded. They closed the door of the mosque, shutting the worshippers inside and blocking their access to the phone. They prevented people from entering the mosque to aid the wounded inside and restricted the movement of ambulances taking casualties to hospitals. All this contributed to the large number of people who died after being shot by Goldstein and the soldiers.

Al-Ahli Hospital: At 6 am, al-Ahli Hospital declared a shortage of blood and called for blood donations through ambulance and mosque loudspeakers. Residents immediately began arriving at the hospital. For the next few hours, a large crowd was assembled, waiting both to donate blood and for news of the wounded.

At 10 am, a large number of soldiers and Border Police shot at the crowd in front of al-Ahli Hospital. Four Palestinians were killed in this attack and scores wounded. Stone-throwing followed. Some say that soldiers came to the hospital to remove the bodies of martyrs, and that they opened fire when people tried to stop them.

Other attacks: Overlooked by the media is the fact that Palestinian residents also reported settler attacks in two other mosques in Hebron and in the nearby villages of Sair and Halhoul on the morning of February 25. A young man was seriously wounded in one of the attacks.

Questions to be answered: The Hebron massacre raises many questions concerning the events of February 25 and the policy of the Israeli authorities prior to that.

A central question concerning the massacre inside Ibrahimi's Mosque is whether Baruch Goldstein had the pre-arranged support of part of the IDF personnel in Hebron. In other words, was Goldstein acting alone? If this is so, the army behaved in a very peculiar way.

Why was the government not prepared for such an action while, since 1982, peace organizations as well as officials from the office of the attorney-general have been warning against settler violence and the dangerous escalation in settler activities. Especially relevant in this context are the reports published by the Hebron Solidarity Committee which, during the two months prior to the massacre, sent several fact-finding missions to the city and systematically warned against the escalation of settler violence in the Hebron area.

After the inquiry commission's first few days of testimony, the Alternative Information Center sent a letter to the commission members in which it raised the following questions:

1) The IDF's Strategy/Approach of Assistance: According to the affidavits we assembled, IDF forces did not provide medical assistance to the wounded people for more than half an hour, and only later on ambulances arrived. This and more: doctors, who identified themselves to the soldiers, and ambulances, were chased by the army, both inside Hebron and on the way to hospitals outside the city. Do regulations compelling such behavior exist, or were these spontaneous reactions by soldiers in Hebron and at the check-points?

2) The Removal of Evidence: Why did the army remove evidence so quickly [such as the bullets and weapon/s], and why did they close the area off from representatives of the public and the press?

Why did the IDF spokesperson consistently report information that later proved to be false, such as the place from which Goldstein entered the mosque from, when and where the soldiers shot, etc. Did the army, in this way, try to cover up what really happened?

3) The "Cave Unit": Where was the IDF "cave unit" immediately after the massacre in the mosque? According to reserve soldiers who have served in Hebron during various periods, as soon as an incident at the site is suspected soldiers from the unit arrive within a matter of minutes.

According to local residents' affidavits, the unit's soldiers did not arrive for a long time after shots rang out.

4) Escalation of settler aggression: For over two months the Hebron Solidarity Committee warned the authorities about the escalation of settler violence directed at the Arab residents of Hebron. Various reports were sent to the defense minister by the committee, following detailed research in the area. Why did the authorities not take the necessary measures in order to halt the escalation?

5) Open-fire regulations: Two-and-a-half years ago, reserve soldier Yoav Hass submitted a petition to the High Court concerning the illegality of the IDF open-fire instructions in the Occupied Territories. The court rejected the petition outright. Did the court not, in light of the testimony already heard by the commission, err in its conclusions? And is this not the time to publish the existing regulations and to submit them for public scrutiny?

Also, why was Goldstein (and his accomplice/s) able to fire for several two minutes with no interference from the soldiers standing within a few dozen meters of him? Why does the IDF say that the video camera, placed inside the mosque for security, was not working?

II. Initial Reactions of the Israeli Government

Killings: Within a couple of hours of the massacre Prime Minister Rabin went on Israeli radio saying that the massacre was "a murderous act by a psychopath" against "innocent individuals", and called on both Arabs and Jews to "show restraint."

Still, the IDF responded with characteristic brutality to the mass demonstrations which broke out all over the Occupied Territories, and inside Israel. (see below sections)

Issue of medical relief: Following Friday's massacre, local hospitals reported critical shortages of emergency medical supplies. Stocks, already low, were completely depleted by the hundreds of people wounded in the massacre and the ongoing clashes.

According to reports from Hebron hospitals, the Israeli government delivered medical supplies the day of the massacre, although not necessarily the type of supplies needed. Afterwards, the government made such medical relief conditional upon a formal request by the Palestinian hospitals and medical associations. The Palestinian position was not to request medical relief from their occupier.

The Hebron Solidarity Group issued an appeal for medicine and funds for supplies and protested the reprehensible Israeli behavior: "It is not the onus of a people under occupation to request medical care from the occupying power. The Hebron Solidarity Committee calls upon the Israeli government to provide immediate and unconditional medical relief to all Palestinians wounded in the massacre and subsequent repression by the Israeli Defense Forces."

In contrast to the Israeli government, many governments abroad sent unsolicited medical supplies to Hebron.

On February 28, the Palestine Physicians' Association termed Hebron a medical disaster area. The association stated that many of the wounded had to be transported to East Jerusalem hospitals because the Hebron hospitals neither could absorb the high number of wounded nor had the facilities to treat them. This fact was responsible for some of the deaths, according to the association. "It is a medical farce when the city of Hebron depends upon another city 40 miles away to stop a hemorrhage," said Amin Thalji, director of Maqassed Hospital in East Jerusalem.

The association held the Israeli government responsible for the situation of Hebron hospitals and for neglecting their duties towards government hospitals in the Occupied Territories in general.

Curfew: A full curfew was imposed throughout the Occupied Territories. The curfew was gradually lifted in most areas, except for major cities like Hebron and Ramallah, but the complete closure of Jerusalem and Israel from the West Bank and Gaza continued.

On March 22, after the curfew on Hebron had continued for almost a month, the Palestine Human Rights Information Center (PHRIC) issued a detailed account on the widespread damage caused by the curfew, which includes:

Killings: Over 14 people killed by IDF troops.

Complete disruption of social life: condolence calls could not be made to families in mourning; the whole holiday of Id al-Fitr was spent under curfew; families were not allowed to visit relatives in prison.

Schools closed: classes were disrupted for over 80,000 students

Severe economic losses: an estimated 50,000 workers were deprived of a month's income; a loss of \$250,000 daily to the local cheese industry, then in high season; expected losses of 30% of the usual crop production for fruit farmers;

Denial of access to medical care.

Roadblocks completely encircling the city: these disrupted the lives, not only of Hebron residents, but also of residents within a huge radius of the city as access to and from their towns and villages was severed; as always, Palestinian residents were harassed routinely at checkpoints and in one instance, on March 3, Inshirah Abdullah Abu Hassan, who was hemorrhaging after the delivery of her first child at home, died due to a prolonged check by soldiers of the ambulance that was transporting her to a hospital.

Interference in human rights work: in one instance, a field worker for al-Haq, who was coordinating with the International Commission of Jurists delegation making a preliminary investigation of the massacre, was arrested March 10 and, without trial, placed under six-month administrative detention.

The IDF has used the curfew to carry out military operations, including an unprecedented 24-hour bombardment of a neighborhood in Hebron on March 22-23. In the attack, three "wanted" Palestinian activists were killed, two women were killed inside their homes, ten houses were hit by missiles and three more were completely demolished and bulldozed.

Closure: The Israeli government, ostensibly reacting to the mass uprising in the Occupied Territories following the massacre, closed off Jerusalem and Israel from the West Bank and Gaza. As with all such total closures, Israel viewed it as being not only in its best "security" interests, but in its economic interests, as well. Tzipi Gal-Yam, the Treasury's economic advisor, said that the closure should have a negligible effect, noting that last year's closure contributed to a significant drop in unemployment, as Israelis replaced Palestinian workers from the Occupied Territories. (Before the closure starting March 1993, 120,000 workers from the Occupied Territories were employed in Israel and East Jerusalem; the number dropped to 40,000, then later rose to 50,000-70,000).

Still, to offset a potential shortage in workers caused by the closure, Labor Minister Namir decided to import thousands of Thai workers, a move she had previously been opposed to.

All West Bank and Gaza Strip residents, even those who had permits to enter Jerusalem before the massacre, were forced to apply for new permits, just as they had to do after the closure one year ago. In this

way, Israel enforces its age-old Zionist ethic of "Jewish Labor," except of course regarding the jobs that no Jew is willing to do.

Measures against "extremists": On February 25 MK Abdul Wahab Darashwe submitted a petition to the High Court requesting the court to order the government and the army to: establish an independent commission of inquiry; disarm "extremist" settlers and put them in administrative detention; seal or destroy Goldstein's house; and impose a curfew on Kiryat Arba. He withdrew the petition two days later after some of the measures he demanded were adopted.

The IDF, for its part, issued three-month detention orders for five Israelis, mainly from *Kach*. One of the detainees, Shmuel Ben-Yishai, had appeared in a television interview the night of the massacre and praised Goldstein as a saint. On March 2, the police issued orders restricting the movement of 18 Kiryat Arba residents and attempted to confiscate some of their weapons. When the settlers refused to hand over their weapons, the police did not insist. At the same time, one IDF source admitted that the army was partly at fault for "being too lenient for too long, while we were warned repeatedly by the *shabak* (General Security Services) about the cultivation of a violent reality that could lead to something like the Hebron massacre."

On Sunday, February 27, the Israeli cabinet agreed to establish a state commission of inquiry to investigate the Hebron massacre, despite Rabin's opposition to such a commission. Rabin said he feared the commission would be drawn out and "absorb energies of senior IDF officials."

From the outset, the government's vision for the commission was very specific, and very limited. A senior official in the Prime Minister's Office described the commission as a move "to both restrict movement of a few dozen Israeli settlers, largely in the Hebron-Kiryat Arba area, including banning their weapons."

On March 6, Israel was abuzz with the apparent plan drafted by the Justice Ministry to remove the 42 Jewish families from Hebron center. Several ministers voiced their support for such an evacuation, particularly from the Bet Hadassah complex. The reasons cited by the ministers were those of security, and they quoted Major-General Yatom, who estimated that 1,000-1,500 soldiers would be needed to guard the 400 settlers. According to government sources, Rabin was the only member of the security cabinet who opposed the evacuation.

III. The Responsibility of the Israeli Government

Disinformation and an attempt to shift responsibility: The purpose of the IDF's statements following the massacre were several: to create the impression that Baruch Goldstein acted alone and that he was deranged; and to cover-up the actions of IDF soldiers, both prior to and following the massacre.

Concerning the number of people killed, on February 28 the head of the IDF in the Occupied Territories, Major-General Dan Yatom, announced that 30 people were killed in the massacre and its aftermath. He said that people originally thought the number was higher due to duplicate names and names of people who turned out to be alive. The IDF put the number of wounded at "several dozen." However, on the same day Dr Daoud Obeidi, the director of Alia Hospital, the largest hospital in Hebron said that 54 people were killed, around 40 of whom were killed inside the mosque. "Many of the dead were taken directly to burial because the families were afraid the army would take them away for autopsy," he said.

As already mentioned, Rabin quickly dismissed Goldstein as "a psychopath." The Friday evening Israeli news quoted the IDF as stating that Goldstein had killed himself (a fallacy quickly proven false). Most of the eyewitness accounts from inside the mosque recall that Goldstein was wearing protective

headphones as he sprayed bullets at the worshippers. Why would a madman on a suicide mission be concerned about his eardrums?

A psychopath? A madman? Too simple and too easy. There is doubtless madness in the ideology of the extreme Israeli Right that wants to impose Jewish rule on 2,000,000 Palestinians and is prepared to use any and all means to attain this objective. But this definition would apply to thousands of Israeli politicians, including MKs and former ministers, and it essentially exempts a respectable section of the Israeli political spectrum from criminal and moral responsibility.

Once we speak about madness, we must speak about the madness of a society that, during 27 years of occupation, has engendered a sick way of relating to the local population based on dehumanization of varying degrees of severity, and that has accepted the systematic killing of civilians, mass imprisonment, the expulsion of activists, demolition of homes, death squads, and open-fire orders that virtually amount to premeditated murder.

The murderer, Goldstein, is the sole person being charged with the Hebron massacre. The following should join him:

- the soldiers who participated in the massacre in the mosque, for any child knows that Goldstein could not have shot such a large number of people on his own;
- the senior officer corps in Hebron, who dropped a veil of obscurity around the incident so as to cover up the fact that a respectable portion of those killed during the massacre were felled by the bullets of Israeli soldiers;
- the chief of staff, the general commander of the IDF central command, and the minister of defense, who gave orders to shoot at the tens of thousands of people who took to the streets to express their pain and anger, and caused over 20 more deaths;
- the entire Israeli government and the cabinet coalition, which have given their backing to the prime minister's and army's policy of nurturing the settlements while acting against the Palestinian Arab population with an "iron fist," even after the massacre.

Not one of these can claim, "We didn't know; we couldn't have predicted." The writing was on the wall. The IDF-settler aggression, killing, and other human rights violations against residents of the Occupied Territories, particularly Hebron, was documented, was televised, was protested, was common knowledge. Every one of the above individuals are guilty for the massacre of February 25, and also for the events that led up to it and followed it.

The steps that the government decided upon in response to the massacre are both scandalous and ridiculous: scandalous because they are, as usual, directed first and foremost against the Palestinian population - like the curfew imposed on all the cities in the West Bank and the guidelines to shoot demonstrators. Ridiculous - because by imposing five sentences of administrative detention on *Kach* leaders and some expulsions from Hebron, the government gives its backing to the rest of the settlers' gangs and actions.

The real issue is not whether *Kach* or *Kahane Chai* is banned but that the Labor-Meretz government is absolving the rest of the settler population from the culpability that is now placed upon them. Israel also gains an additional point in that these extremist movements are identified with new immigrants from the United States thus Israel is not responsible (in the broad sense of the word) for them - they are the responsibility of "others" - fascists originating from within the United States.

Kach and *Kahane Chai* have been banned by the authority of the Prevention of Terror Act. This is the same act used primarily for the oppression of Palestinian political movements and progressive Jewish forces inside Israel. While the left today welcomes the banning of neo-Nazi Jews, it also gives legitimacy to future attacks against Palestinian political organizations or radical leftists based upon the same act. Worse than this, instead of demanding the expansion of political rights for the entire population under Israeli control, their consent to the use of this act will later be used to justify the restriction of the political rights of the Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Relocation, not evacuation, of settlers: The discussion within the government concerning the evacuation of settlers from Hebron center quickly reverted to talk of the settlers' relocation to Kiryat Arba or Givat HaHarsina settlements, also in Hebron. On March 18, the Hebron Solidarity Committee issued a press release protesting the direction the government was taking regarding the evacuation of settlers from Hebron center:

In the wake of the massacre in the Ibrahimi Mosque on February 25th, there has been discussion in Israel of an evacuation of settlers from Hebron. In government circles, however, evacuation of settlers merely means their "redeployment."

An article published in Ha'aretz (18-3-94) leaves no doubt as to Prime Minister Rabin's intentions: "Security officials raised a proposal before the Prime Minister and Minister of Security, Yitzhak Rabin, which suggests concentrating settlers in Hebron in one or two centers as opposed to the five centers in which settlers are currently living. The recommended area for relocation is the Givat HaHarsinah settlement...Another proposal that was raised is the evacuation of every settlement in the heart of Hebron and the transfer of the settlers to Kiryat Arba...Rabin said 'the settlement plan in Hebron is stupid' and makes it difficult for security forces to protect the Jews in the city."

Any such relocation of settlers, as Rabin made clear, is a strategical maneuver made for the sake of "Jewish security," and will only serve to frustrate future attempts to evacuate settlers from Hebron, and the rest of the Occupied Territories, and move them to within the Green Line. Moreover, the suggested site for relocation, Givat HaHarsina, has long been a focus of settler aggression against the local Palestinian residents there. (see below section)

It is also important to note the fallacy of distinguishing between Givat HaHarsina and Kiryat Arba since they are both part of the same massive, fenced-in settlement.

Warnings prior to the massacre: In his testimony to the Commission of Inquiry on March 23, IDF Chief of Staff Ehud Barak said that there was no way to predict the massacre. "It came like a bolt out of the blue," he said.

There were several factors that should have given the IDF clear indication, had they been interested in protecting Palestinians' lives, that such a tragedy was not only predictable, but likely. Such factors include the behavior of Goldstein himself and the settlers' total unaccountability for their attacks against Palestinians.

Goldstein was notorious among Palestinian residents in Hebron, especially regular worshippers at the Ibrahimi mosque, for his harassment of and attacks on Palestinians. Two such recent attacks are recounted in the following letter sent to Prime Minister Rabin by the Islamic Wakf:

"Greetings...

Subject: The Ibrahimi Mosque

A number of Jewish settlers attacked six of the guards of the Ibrahimi Mosque and a 64 year-old worshipper on Friday night, the 8th of October, 1993. As the call to the night prayer was being made, Baruch [Goldstein] attacked the *muezzin* [the man calling for prayer] and cut the call short. He also poured flammable materials on the carpet of the mosque on Thursday night, the 14th of October, 1993. If it hadn't been for the attentiveness of the guards and worshippers, something dreadful might have happened.

These daily recurrent violations in the Ibrahimi Mosque cannot be ignored.

Unfortunately, we have never felt that the Israeli authorities have taken a decision against the actions of these hostile settlers.

We hope that we have never, nor will we ever, accept any prayer in the Ibrahimi Mosque other than Muslim prayers. We hope that the authorities will put an end to these inflaming, hostile actions against freedom of worship and the Muslims' full right to their mosque.

Respectfully,

The head of the Islamic Wakf and the head of the Higher Islamic Council/Jerusalem

Written on 16 October, 1993

For over two months, the Hebron Solidarity Committee organized fact-finding missions in Hebron and various solidarity demonstrations to warn against the escalating violence of the settlers and the IDF's complicity. In a statement published December 29th, 1993, the committee wrote:

In response to the upsurge in settler violence a group of unaffiliated Jerusalem-based activists have initiated the Hebron Solidarity Group. This violence is particularly acute in Hebron, where Jewish settlements have been established in the heart of the city. Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles the settlers have organized large-scale, systematic attacks consisting of random shooting, beating, arson, stoning and roadblocks, carried out under the direction of the Yesha leadership and with the complicity, and sometimes coordination, of the IDF.

In addition to daily car stoning by settlers and weekly attacks against people and property that occur just before and after every Shabbat, Palestinian Hebronites are subject to constant IDF harassment. For instance, to facilitate the settlers' access to Merat HaMachpela/Abraham's Mosque, the IDF establishes Saturday roadblocks, which cut the city in half and greatly hinders Palestinian commerce and freedom of movement. A nightly ban -- the only order of its kind in the West Bank -- prohibits the movement of all Palestinian vehicles, public and private, from 7 pm to 3:30 am."

Motivated by the activities and reports of the HSC, *Ha'aretz* reporter Yosef Elgazi wrote an article on the deteriorating conditions in Hebron:

In the daily press the place where these events took place is called *Giv'at Harsina*. The Arab residents of Hebron call it *Telat a-Dab'e*, i.e., Hyena Hill. On the hill-top stands the flashy, new neighborhood of the settlers; on the steep slopes, like moss on stones... the old, wretched-looking homes of the local people. A narrow road is all that separates them. Supposedly neighbors, in actuality divided by a chasm of hatred. During the disturbances perpetrated by the settlers on the night of December 6, in the wake of the murder of two members of the [Israeli] Lapid family, two houses in this area were damaged; the homes of the families of 'Abed a-Hafez a-Z'atari, 70, and three of his sons, Muhammad Kamal, Muhammad Nur a-Din and Taj a-Din.

Our troubles began the moment that the settlers moved in here," recounts Muhammad Kamal 33, married and the father of three. "At every opportunity, whether in the context of the organized riots that they carry out in the city or when they just feel like it, the settlers harass us. In the morning when they are on their way to work or school, in the evening, when they are returning to their homes, and at night. Nothing deters them, not even the sabbath which is a holy day for the Jews, not being on the way to sabbath or holiday prayers in the synagogue that is located in what the Jews call the double cave and we Muslims call *al-Haram al-Ibrahimiyyeh* (Abraham's holy place) in the name of our father Ibrahim, may he rest in peace.

Ever since the settlers moved onto the hill, the authorities have forbidden us to build any structure at all, even to place a stone fence around our houses. In order to protect ourselves from natural disasters and those brought about by the settlers, we have made piles of old tires parallel to the road.

The settlers are in the habit of throwing stones at our houses. They pay no attention to whether there are people around, even old people, pregnant women, or small children. Time after time they have broken our windows. They have completely ruined the solar collectors [which stand on the roof to heat water]. We fixed them several times, until we gave up in despair. Now they stand there broken. Sometimes the settlers throw stones from their territory, and sometimes they do not hesitate to come close and enter our yards.

...Settler harassment reached a climax the night of December 6. "That night hundreds of settlers gathered near our houses. They shouted and threw stones at us. The windows of our houses were broken by the stones. My youngest son, Mu'ayed, 3, who was sleeping on our bed, was cut on the forehead and arm by fragments of glass," Muhammad Kamal a-Z'atari told us last week.

The toddler required medical attention at the Red Crescent clinic, and a month after the event the scar on his forehead was still visible.

According to a-Z'atari, settlers entered the courtyard and smashed water pipes, destroyed trees, and banged on the doors and windows. They fired their weapons in all directions and set fire to the tires surrounding the houses. Thick, choking smoke rose from the fire, and the electrical wires were completely burnt [shorting out many appliances]. The fire reached the home of Taj a-Din a-Z'atari. Family members and neighbors hastened to remove his children from the house, fearing for their lives. To this day one can see signs of the flames that licked at the outside and inside walls of the house.

...Some time passed before we succeeded in taking little Mu'ayed to the clinic for first aid," stated Muna a-Z'atari, 25, wife of Muhammad Kamal a-Z'atari. "All of the children were awakened from their sleep by the stones falling on the house, the breaking glass, and the volleys of shots. They shook with fear, cried and screamed. We all hid in the small hallway [to escape flying] fragments of broken glass. All of my efforts to calm them failed. It went on almost all night.

Muhammad Kamal a-Z'atari took advantage of one of the breaks in the extended curfew that was imposed on the Palestinian residents of Hebron to complain to the civil administration and the police. He has in his possession copies of the letter of complaint that he submitted to the head of the civil administration on December 15, of the complaint submitted by members of his family via the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture in the city to the Hebron City Council and the Commander of the Hebron Police Force on December 18, as well as a police complaint form from December 26, signed by Police Sergeant Major Siman-Tov, badge number 28192-3

At the civil administration they met with an officer wearing an IDF uniform, known to the [Palestinian] residents as "Captain Ahab." "After he heard us, he sent us back to the police," a-Z'atari recounts. "The police representative who visited the [burnt] area did not write any report. When I asked him to write a report on what he saw and heard, he declared: 'I decide what to do and not you. It is my business and not yours.' About two weeks ago, when I requested protection from settler attacks, as in past incidents, the civil administration referred me to the police department. The police told me that it was the responsibility of the army [i.e., civil administration]. Who am I to turn to?"

In response, the civil administration spokesman's office replied that they "knew about a-Z'atari's complaint. Close to the [time of the] incident itself, the head of the civil administration visited the location. The civil administration called the incident to the attention of the army. The army responded that it was suitably prepared." The Hebron district police spokesman informed us that "the police examined the complaint, but the complainants are unable to identify those who they claim attacked them. No one was arrested at the time [lit. place] of the incident. The soldiers who were present were also unable to identify those involved in the incident. The police are continuing the investigation and searching for leads to uncover suspects."

On the morning of the Goldstein's attack, the police received a warning from Goldstein's wife, a warning they apparently did not take seriously. In the March 12 edition of the Israeli newspaper magazine, "Shishi", Mariam, Goldstein's wife, said she had called the police 20 minutes before the massacre and urged them not to let him enter the mosque. She was troubled by Goldstein's unusual behavior that morning, such as when he said he was going to pray at the Cave of the Patriarchs but did not take his prayer shawl.

She said she had also told the army officer at Kiryat Arba that her husband was going to carry out some "crazy act." The officer was a settler from a nearby settlement on reserve duty and confirmed her story to the newspaper.

"She said to stop him before it was too late," the officer said. "We tried to call him through the walkie-talkie in the Kiryat Arba municipality car that he was in, but he didn't respond."

Other indicators that should have led the IDF to take greater precautions (instead of the reduced security at the Mosque the morning of the attack) were: many settlers' pledges to take actions in order to

detonate the peace talks; and the settler's annual tradition on Purim, the day on which the massacre took place, of carrying out attacks on mosques.

IV. Palestinian Reactions

Islamic Reaction: The head of the Islamic High Committee, Hasan Tahbub, accused Israeli authorities of complicity in the slaughter perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein. "To allow Baruch Goldstein to enter the mosque in military uniform, with IDF-issued weapons and ammunition -- enough for an entire army unit - illustrates cooperation between him and the soldiers stationed at the mosque." Tahbub added that, "I cannot understand how this person continued to fire his weapon for eight and a half minutes without the soldiers intervening in any way."

Tahbub spoke about the letter issued by the Islamic Waqf in Jerusalem in November, sent to the Prime Minister and Defense Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, protesting Goldstein's past violations against Muslim worshippers in the mosque. Tahbub stated that Goldstein was notorious in Hebron for his harassment of and violence against Palestinians. "We have warned more than once of the possibility of a massacre in the mosque. We have written numerous letters to the Israeli authorities concerning this matter and have received no replies."

Tahbub criticized Israeli policy regarding the mosque. "For over 20 years, the Israeli authorities took no action against the settlers' attempts to overtake the mosque. Their gradual encroachment has resulted in a situation in which, today, the Palestinians have only a small space in which to pray. Now, even this small area is covered in blood." Tahbub insisted that the mosque is a Muslim site and that it is forbidden for other religions to worship there.

PLO-Tunis reaction: Following the Hebron massacre, the PLO announced a three-day mourning period and general strike for all Palestinian communities throughout the Arab world. The PLO condemned the massacre in a statement issued world-wide, stating that Israel is responsible for the killing. The PLO demanded international protection for the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories and called upon the international community, particularly the US and Russia, to put pressure on Israel to prevent further bloodshed.

The statement also criticized Israel for its army's continued harassment of Palestinians and the government's defense of the settlers' actions. The PLO also accused the Israeli army of preventing Palestinians from entering hospitals in order to donate blood after the massacre.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat said in a statement on Monte Carlo Radio that he had instructed PLO Security Council representative Nasser al-Qudwa to call an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council in order to discuss the massacre and demand protection for the Palestinian people and sacred sites. Arafat placed responsibility for the massacre on the Israeli military and said that the massacre represents a great danger not only to the peace process, but to all dimensions of Israeli and Palestinian existence. He stated that, "This massacre will surely be a great detriment to the peace process." Arafat asked, "What kind of cooperation was there between the settlers and the Israeli army in the mosque?" and addressed US President Bill Clinton with the question, "What is the United States' position on this massacre, and what is the position of President Clinton, who signed the autonomy agreement with us in Washington last September?"

Said Kamal, the PLO representative in Cairo, commented that, "This massacre casts great doubts on Israel's commitment to the negotiating process and on the feasibility of implementing the interim period of autonomy, particularly with regard to the status of the settlements. I demand that the Israeli authorities bring a complete halt to all settlement activity and commence an evacuation of the settlers from all of the West Bank and Gaza."

In Amman, Jordan, two members of the PLO Executive Committee demanded that the PLO reconsider its participation in the negotiations. One of the Committee members, Suleiman Najab, told Reuters Press Service that, "In light of the massacre, the PLO leadership must review in full the entire peace process and evaluate its benefits... The massacre shows that the current negotiating process is a smokescreen for the occupation authorities and the settlers to continue their crimes. The Israeli government is responsible for the massacre because they have ignored the previous criminal activities of their settlers. The violations of the settlers have been committed in full view of the Israeli government, which has taken no action against the settlers, giving them to understand that they enjoy the tacit support of their government."

"It is clear now that the postponement of any discussion of the settlements in the interim period is a threat to the security of the Palestinian people and that it paves the way for future massacres. We must demand that the UN Security Council implement its decisions regarding the illegality of the settlements and withdraw the settlers from the West Bank immediately. The massacre demonstrates that the settlements are a time bomb threatening to detonate the entire peace process... From now on, the settlements must be the first item on the negotiators' agenda."

Speaking from Amman, Jordan, Yasser Abd Rabo, the Secretary of the Palestinian Democratic Federation (FIDA) and a member of the Palestinian negotiating team, called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council and appealed to the Arab leaders to issue measures against Israel. He stated that, "The Israeli authorities have attempted to justify and excuse the massacre in various ways. However, it should be clear that this Zionist massacre was perpetrated with the support of the Israeli military for the aim of sabotaging the peace process... Throughout the negotiations the Israelis have pressured the Palestinian team into making concessions towards the security interests of the settlements. What has happened proves the need to put an end to this blackmail. The massacre necessitates an insistence on the disarmament of the settlers, the withdrawal of the settlers and the army from the Occupied Territories and international protection for the Palestinian people."

Opposition Reaction: The Palestinian opposition factions condemned the massacre and called for a halt to the negotiations and a nullification of the Oslo Agreement. Following the massacre, an emergency meeting was held between ten opposition factions. The opposition stated that the Hebron massacre was the inevitable consequence of the Oslo Agreement, which legalized the occupation and accorded legitimacy to the settlements and their inhabitants. The opposition called for the unification of all the national factions to confront the Agreement. Finally, they called on the international community and the Arab nations to bring an end to the crimes of the Israeli occupation.

The common leadership of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) stated that the Israeli authorities are responsible for the massacre. They emphasized that the continuation of the negotiations in Taba and Paris illustrates a general lack of concern about the massacre. The PFLP-DFLP leadership called for a withdrawal from the negotiations and for a return to the people's struggle and the legitimation of Palestinian national principles. They called on the international community and the UN Security Council to provide protection for the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories until the Israeli withdrawal from these territories.

Popular reaction: Immediately after the massacre, the Unified Leadership of the Intifadah issued a call to escalate the Intifadah. The leadership called for: a three day general strike in the Occupied Territories; one week of mourning and the raising of black mourning flags everywhere; funeral marches; mass demonstrations; and attacks on settlers.

Upon hearing of the massacre, people all over the Occupied Territories flocked to hospitals to donate blood for the victims of the attack. Soldiers surrounded the hospitals and imposed a curfew all over the Occupied Territories. Still, people made their way to the hospitals. Clashes broke out all over. For example,

in Bethlehem soldiers fired on a large crowd of people outside Beit Jala Hospital and wounded 12 people and killed Muhammed Yusef Ghayatheh. All over the West Bank, including Jerusalem, there were mass demonstrations. Rage over the massacre brought out people from all sectors of society. Thousands of IDF soldiers were deployed to put down the protests, and the army killed over 15 people in these demonstrations during the week following the massacre.

The massacre had a strong impact on people's thinking regarding the "peace" process. Since the September 13 Agreement, people's support for the process had been wavering between cautious support and total rejection. The massacre served to push many more of those who had been in support away from support for the negotiations. A recent poll indicated that only 17% of people favor the Palestinian negotiating team returning to the talks without prior conditions and changes on the ground by Israel.

Even one month after the massacre, the widespread demonstrations have not subsided. Sensing that people are not easily going to forget this latest terrible outrage, the IDF has reinforced its troops and stations in the Occupied Territories.

Reactions of '48 Palestinians: One of the most important phenomena which came as a result of the massacre in Hebron was the response of outrage by the Palestinian population inside Israel. In the Galilee, in the triangle area, and the Negev, immediate demonstrations were organized which, in various places, turned into violent clashes with the Israeli police forces. In the majority of cases, the demonstrations were spontaneous, without the involvement of the local political parties, including the communist party and the Islamic movement.

More interesting is the fact that particularly in the less political areas, and specifically in such mixed areas as Jaffa, and Lydda [Lod], the confrontations were the most violent: on Saturday (26-2-94) Jaffa looked like Ramallah during the height of the Intifada. Undoubtedly the deterioration in the quality of life among the Palestinian population in such places added fuel to the flames of rages lit by the massacre in Hebron.

The violent response by the Israeli police, which led to the killing of one demonstrator in the Bedouin township of Rahat in the Negev, was more reminiscent of the army's *modus operandi* in the Occupied Territories than the way Israeli police usually deal with Israeli demonstrators. Dani Rubenstein, a progressive journalist, deals with this phenomenon in a very strong article which was published in *Ha'aretz* on 3-3-94:

[...]Whoever would be critical of the Arabs of Israel, claiming that their shouts this week were too aggressive against the State and its institutions, should remember the consensus in Israel surrounding the need for real heart-searching after the massacre in the Machpela Cave [Ibrahimi Mosque]. Whenever there is agreement on the need for penetrating heart-searching, it is impossible to demand that others, who identify with a certain collective, do their demonstrating quietly and orderly, directing their vague shouts somewhere into thin air. Responsibility for the abhorrence from Kiriat Arba comes with a very clear address - the state and society from which it came. Demand that the Arab demonstrators ignore this is nothing but hypocritical and licentious.

The police - the general commander, the regional commanders and force officers on the ground - persistently claim that it only did the minimum that was necessary to maintain public order. As long as the demonstrations were done quietly, the general commander stated, the police were restrained and stood off to the side. Only after roads were blocked and property was damaged, or in one case, when stones were thrown at the walls of a police station, so they tell us, did the police go into action. Escalation followed, along with the shedding of blood.

[...]The choice which is put forth by the police when explaining its actions in these incidents is either one of necessary and proper public order or of complete anarchy. It is very easy to translate this choice into a decision between the existence of the state or its collapse. With the wave of a hand this comparison changes

the Arabs of Israel who are being beaten and shot at into the aggressors. The role of the victim very quickly passes from the massacred in the Machpela Cave to the Israelis themselves - threatening their public order and in fact, their very existence. This deceitful process permits the police to describe itself as a defense force and to ignore its role as an instrument of aggression.

This is how world order returns to normality: it is permissible to beat, shoot tear gas, to arrest dozens, shoot metal bullets with the intent to injure - and to continue on self-righteously, with no ethical or historical qualms whatsoever. Thus the Israeli police offer us another affliction in a series of troubles whose origins lie in the pathetic Israeli tendency to deny the Palestinian tragedy and to bestow solely upon themselves the role of the victim. [...]

V. Israeli Reactions

Government Reactions: The reaction of Israeli establishment figures to the massacre mainly reflects the extent that they dwell in a realm removed from reality, practically one of psychosis.

Many politicians focussed on the damage to Israel's international image due to the massacre. Zalman Shoval, former ambassador to Washington, said, "If this man had been an agent of the PLO or Hamas, he could not have caused more harm politically to Israel."

Police Minister Moshe Shahal said, "This mass murder has changed our once moral norms. We are supposed to be different from other races, with a high regard for human life."

President Ezer Weizman called the massacre an "ugly crime which is the worst in Jewish history." He said, "We need to come out like I've done and make known our feelings, so people will not think the action of one man is the action of a whole people...It is contrary to what we believe in, it is contrary to what we have taught our children, it is contrary to everything Jewish and Israeli."

On the contrary, it is very Jewish-Israeli. To erase the Palestinian presence in the Land of Israel - no matter which side of the Green Line one is referring to - whether by expulsion, by murder (by people either in or out of uniform), by land expropriation, economic strangling and by cultural suppression has been standard Zionist *modus operandi* for the last 100 years. Baruch Goldstein was simply a zealous Zionist.

The ferocity with which Goldstein was condemned by politicians also reflects the extent to which Israeli society took pains to isolate Goldstein and his final action as an aberration, a freak, something in which they played no part, and which is no part of them.

The Knesset responded to the massacre in Hebron with a unanimous vote of condemnation. Shulamit Aloni, from *Meretz*, and Rehevam Ze'evi, the "transferist," stood side by side in condemnation. Together with Uzi Baram, the "dove" of the Labor party, stood Hanan Porat who had, only hours after the massacre in Hebron, in a meeting of the Kiryat Arba council, smiled at the cameras who were covering the event and wished everyone a "Happy Purim." It was in fact a "purification ceremony" of sorts, with members of the Knesset setting aside their daily political differences in order to condemn the murderer from Kiriat Arba with a united voice.

Meretz MK's were among the first to condemn, as well to use the strongest language to denounce and castigate the murderer and his *Kach* companions. During the announcement, the condemnation, and the admonition, the *Meretz* MK's apparently forgot that they were part of the government which was responsible for keeping the settlers in Hebron and Kiriat Arba; they forgot that they are part of the government which has neither disarmed the settlers nor put on trial those settlers who have been running wild in the streets of Hebron and throughout the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip. On the contrary, the *Meretz* MK's supported the position of the Israeli government and its concern for the "security needs of the settlers." It was MK Yosi Sarid (*Meretz*) who took advantage of the PLO leadership's confidence in him

in order to convince the PLO to agree to leave aside the issue of settlements.

However, the temporary consensus in the Knesset which developed around this collective ritual of cathartic self-absolution fell apart as soon as the massacre was debated. When MK Hashem Mahmeed mentioned the fact that women had not been allowed to pray in the mosque that day, Deputy Foreign Minister Mordechai Gur challenged him for "more than implying that the attack was planned. MK's Ze'evi and Avi Yehezkel (Labor) got in a shouting match over whose condemnation of the massacre was more sincere.

Reactions from the Right: The rightwing opposition factions in the Knesset condemned the Hebron massacre. The day after, the opposition leaders met in Tel Aviv for emergency deliberations, during which a joint statement condemning the deed was formulated. Most of the statement however was dedicated to defending the settlers and cautioning the government against "exploitation of the murder."

The joint announcement states that "the Opposition warns the government away from the intention to exploit the tragic event in Hebron to harm Jewish settlement community. The members of the Opposition demand of the government not to lose self-control, and to end its policy of surrendering to terrorism which has brought about an unprecedented deterioration in the security situation and in the IDF's deterrent capability" (*Ha'aretz*, 27-2-94). Further into the statements the Opposition leaders call upon the government not to take far-reaching steps like the disarming of the settlers, without "national agreement."

The stance of the settlers in Kiryat Arba, murderer Baruch Goldstein's community, is much more extreme. For example, lawyer and settler leader Elyakim Ha'etzni stated that he hopes "that those miserable figures who today make up the government will not exploit this opportunity to make more concessions to the Palestinians" (*Ha'aretz*, 27-2). Avraham Strok, chair of the Committee of Jews at Beit Hadassah (an extremist settlement in the heart of Hebron), stated: "For a long time I have not condemned reactions by Jews to Arab terrorism, which has gone on for a generation already (*ibid.*). The *Yesha* (Judea, Samaria, and Gaza) Rabbis Committee also refused to condemn the massacre directly. An announcement issued by them states: "The government bears responsibility for this abominable situation which is costing both Jews and Arabs victims. One who frees murderers by the hundreds and thousands, grants them international status, and abandons the field to them for murder and rioting - with his own hands creates the conditions for the bloody rioting and spiritual catastrophe now raging through both populations" (27-2).

Journalist Tsvi Gilat describes the mood of the Hebron settlers: "Early indications? Current signals and future ones. Hanan Porat appearing at the [Kiryat Arba] town council scant hours after the murder, with a broad smile, wishing people a 'happy Purim.' It's a religious obligation (*mitzvah*) to be joyful on Purim, he explains" (*Yediot Aharonot*, 27-2-94).

The most extreme reaction from the Right was that of *Kach*, who expressed joy over the massacre and the hope that this event would add fuel to the flames of hatred between the two peoples. An announcement published by the movement stated: "*Kach* bows its head in memory of the holy hero, Dr. Baruch Goldstein, may his righteous memory be a blessing, and may God redeem his blood, who was killed in sanctification of God's name, in our forefathers' grave in Hebron" (*Ha'aretz* 27-2).

On February 27, Baruch Goldstein was buried in a temporary grave in the Meir Kahane Garden in Kiryat Arba. The army refused to allow his burial in the Jewish cemetery in Hebron, as requested by Goldstein's widow, Mariam. In a compromise reached with the help of President Weizman, it was decided to bury him at Kiryat Arba and move the body to Hebron at a later date. In a eulogy, Rabbi Dov Lior, chief rabbi of Kiryat Arba, said of Goldstein, "He worked for the people of Israel and in the name of heaven. There is no doubt he thought that this [the killings] was the way to awaken the people."

Reactions from the Left: Just as in previous instances, the radical left was the first to react to the massacre and to point the accusing finger at the one who was primarily responsible for it, namely, the government of Israel. On the same day as the massacre, Peace Bloc and the Hebron Solidarity Group initiated two vigils

- one in Jerusalem and one in Tel Aviv. Peace Now later joined these vigils. While the latter called for measures to be taken against "extremist settlers," Peace Bloc and the Hebron Solidarity Group, in a leaflet issued by them immediately after the massacre, wrote:

**Replace the IDF in the Occupied Territories with an International Force
Disarm the Settlers!**

This was unavoidable. Settlers have, for many months, been subjecting the residents of Hebron to a reign of terror, while soldiers stand by and government gives its approval.

For the past two months the Hebron Solidarity Committee and Peace Bloc have been warning about the dangers of a massacre in Hebron, and demanding from the government to take drastic measures against the settlers who have been threatening and causing destruction among the Palestinian population there. The government stubbornly refused to its policies in the city with the hopes that pressure from the settlers upon the Palestinian residents would serve the government's policies of trying to "soften up" the Palestinians and contribute to actions intended to "make them sweat" which have been adopted since the beginning of this year. This time it is not a matter of sweat but rivers of blood.

Just as in Sabra and Shatila, the government cannot claim that "its hands did not shed this blood" - dozens of soldiers are permanently stationed there, and in spite of this, the settler was able to carry out his evil plan.

Just as in Sabra and Shatila, the government cannot claim that it did not know that such a massacre was likely to happen. The government consciously let the situation deteriorate to this level. The Rabin government must bear full responsibility for the massacre in Hebron, which has proven that with its current policies it is unable to defend the lives of the Palestinian residents. We appeal to the Israeli government to:

- * immediately disarm the settlers!
- * evacuate the settlers from Hebron!
- * set up an inquiry to investigate the responsibility of the IDF and the politicians for the massacre in Hebron!

We appeal to the international community for:

- * international protection for the Occupied Territories; and security for the residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip until rule has been transferred into the hands of the PLO!

On 26-3-94, the day after the massacre, Peace Now organized a demonstration in Jerusalem that was attended by approximately 2,000 demonstrators. It was at this time that the call by Peace Now to evacuate the settlers from Hebron was heard for the first time. The presence of Minister of Absorption, Ya'ir Tsaban (*Meretz*) on the stage angered various leftwing activists who shouted slogans against government and the IDF responsibility for the massacre. There were several clashes between these activists and those from Peace Now responsible for crowd control.

During the week after the massacre, the Hebron Solidarity Group organized an emergency medical relief fund for hospitals in Hebron. The Hebron Solidarity Group also collected food supplies that they distributed to Palestinian families living near the Jewish settlement of Har Hasinah (where settlers from Kiryat Arba regularly harass and cause damage to their property) who were under the 24-hour curfew imposed on the entire city of Hebron immediately after the massacre.

There was a large gap between the reactions among the mainstream left and those of the more radical left. These differences are primarily a result of their differing worldviews and the fact that the moderate left is now sitting in the government and feels responsible for maintaining its stability. Meanwhile, since the signing of the Oslo agreement, the radical left that has been warning of the dangers involved with leaving the settlers in the heart of the Occupied Territories during the interim period holds the government

responsible for the massacre and issued a call for the immediate dismantling of all of the settlements, and to replace the IDF with international forces. Meretz and Peace Now, however, saw as their primary responsibility the absolution of the Israeli government, and in fact, all of Israel, from any guilt.

Characteristic of this was the unanimous vote of all of the Jewish MK's (MK's from Hadash and the Arab Democratic Party opposed the text of the proposal) in support of the proposal summarizing the plenary debate on the subject of the massacre. In their support for the proposal, MK's from both Meretz and Moledet suddenly found themselves in the same camp.

In a leaflet distributed to participants at a Peace Now demonstration in Tel Aviv on March 5 Matzpen, an anti-Zionist group, notes:

Today those Meretz ministers and heads of Peace Now are standing on the platforms of demonstrations and cursing the killer Baruch Goldstein. Not one word of apology, not one sentence of regret. "Our hands didn't shed this blood," they say. And with a unanimous vote in the Knesset their representatives, together with Hanan Porat [the Right wing National Religious Party and Gush Emunim leader] and Rehavam Ze'evi ["Transfer" party] condemned the slaughter in Hebron. It is no accident that Ze'evi participated in the condemnation which is none other than an attempt to clean up the stain that the state was tarnished with due to 25 years of settlement and due to its policy of reinforcing and encouraging the settlers; a condemnation together with Hanan Porat is no condemnation at all, but rather a legitimization of all the deeds and declarations that enabled the slaughter.

We came here this evening to proclaim in a clear voice, among the chorus of grating voices of the hypocrites and participants to the crime who now stand on the platform:

Partners to the crime: because they closed their eyes to the settlers' crimes;
Partners to the crime: because they shut their eyes in the face of the tortured inhabitants of Hebron;
Partners to the crime: because they refuse to take real steps towards dismantling the murderers' nests in all of the Occupied Territories;
Partners to the crime: because they intentionally encourage the settlers to stay and thus serve as a pressure on the PLO in the negotiations;
Partners to the crime: because they deceived people by distributing the lie of "Peace without dismantling the settlements."

We came here to demonstrate against the violence of the settlers but also against the continued existence of the settlements in the Occupied Territories.

We came here to demonstrate against the gangs of murderers, but also against all those who cooperated with them and who continue to refuse to take the only steps that could prevent even more victims.

We came here to demonstrate also against the government that distances the prospect for peace between the two peoples of this land.

Prof Menachem Brinker (Peace Now), during the demonstration that was organized jointly by Peace Now and the Committee of Arab Mayors on 5-3-94 in Tel Aviv, said: "If all of Israel is united in its condemnation of this murderer and his removal from our midst, then it is not our hands that shed this blood." This is the essence. The function of the protest, as understood by Peace Now, was to extract the murderer and his colleagues from the national collective, and by that to absolve Israel from any guilt. The call for the establishment of a commission of inquiry plays an important role in changing the accused into the judge. It is as if the massacre is not a matter between Israel the occupier and the occupied Palestinian population, but rather a group of people from another planet against a number of Muslim worshippers in the city of Hebron.

This is the reason that Peace Now, in the same demonstration, opposed Peace Bloc's demonstrating with them under the slogan: "Dismantle All of the Settlements Immediately!" Peace Now threatened to

physically remove the Peace Bloc activists from the demonstration. Unfortunately for Peace Now, most of the demonstrators identified with Peace Bloc and prevented Peace Now from carrying out its threat.

VI. The Commissions of Inquiry

The Role of the Israeli Inquiry Commission: When the State of Israel suddenly finds itself in a mess, it has at its disposal a few methods that it can use to remedy the situation. One way that it can accomplish this is to create an alternative incident, one that is particularly showy, in an Arab country, in order to avert international attention. There are those who claim that the Israelis were behind the bomb which exploded a few days ago in Beirut. However, it is too early at this stage to determine whether or not Israelis were indeed involved in this attack.

The second way is by having the entire political establishment voice its unanimous condemnation: for the president, the prime minister, and the entire Knesset to come one after the other shouting their condemnation, thus absolving the State of Israel of any responsibility ("If we condemn, it must be clear that we are not the ones who shed this blood.") Thus in the Knesset plenary session, every MK, whether from the right or the left, stood together in their condemnation of the massacre. Shulamit Aloni with Rehavam Ze'evi, Dedi Tsucker with Hanan Porat, who had just two days before appeared before the *Yesha* council in a Purim costume, while the television cameras captured the boisterous laughter of the MK from the National Religious Party). This unity is not coincidental: it is intended to demonstrate total national unity in response to international criticism of Israel.

However, the most important means at the government's disposal is the commission of inquiry. After the massacre in Sabra and Shatila, the government of Israel decided to set up a governmental commission of inquiry in order to investigate the various levels of responsibility for what took place in the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut. By establishing such a commission of inquiry the government of Israel was able to realize some important achievements: it was able to buy time (the commission was in session for many months before its findings were finally published), and during those months it was able to shut the mouths of public debate and mass protest with the argument that public debate should be put off until the commission submits its findings. More than this, Israel was able to gain points among the international liberal community ("Look at how democratic Israel is that the government doesn't even hesitate to set up an 'independent' body to investigate itself!"). When the Kahn Commission published its findings, there was no longer any discussion of the Israeli government's guilt, but rather the bravery and courage of the government to let a commission investigate it and even be critical of it.

In light of the success of that exercise, the government of Israel decided to repeat it after the massacre in the courtyard of the Dome of the Rock in 1990. That commission was also a very efficient tool for blurring the facts, for buying time, and silencing public criticism. It is no wonder then, that after the massacre in Hebron, the government of Israel has decided once again to repeat the process. In order to gain points in the local and international community, the leftwing MK's, who are more aware of the importance of Israel's public image, were able to overcome Rabin's insistence upon leaving the IDF out of the public investigation.

The composition of the committee which was set up to investigate the massacre in Hebron is an exact witness to its main function: in addition to two justices from the Supreme Court, Justices Shamgar and Goldberg; former Chief of Staff, Major-General Moshe Levi; Judge Zuabi', in order to gain Arab "legitimacy;" and in order to appease the angry left, President of the Open University, Professor Ya'ari, known for his moderate views.

The commission will be in session for many long months, witnesses will be summoned, and when the conclusions will finally be published, no one will be interested any longer in the massacre. And even if the

findings should prove to be critical of the army, the *Shabak* (General Security Services), and/or the government, the criticism will pale in light of the achievements in the area of public relations.

The First Weeks of the Israeli Inquiry: Although the mandate of the commission is very limited, and clearly forbids it from investigating the political context of the massacre, its first few days raised a few very important facts, concerning both the massacre and the irresponsible policy - to say the least - of the Israeli army towards the settlers in Hebron.

- Soldiers' testimonies have definitively dismissed the IDF spokesperson's report on how Goldstein entered the mosque, and corroborated Palestinian eyewitness reports.
- Also contradicting the IDF spokesperson's claims, the video cameras were working during the massacre. Still remaining is the question: Where are the tapes? Did someone intentionally destroy them?
- According to a senior Border Police officer, there is a clear military order forbidding soldiers from shooting at settlers, even when the settler is shooting at Palestinians.
- More generally, the army claims that they didn't get any warning concerning settler violence, despite the massive amount of public evidence testifying to such violence.

Since the establishment of the Shamgar Commission, the entire country has been playing the "as if" game. As if the way soldiers relate to the Palestinian population has not been written about year after year in the Israeli press. As if there has never been any mention about the army's lack of response when settlers go on rampages against Palestinians. As if no one had ever heard about joint army-settler patrols. However, the winners in this game of "as if" are the judges. Following are the impressions of Ruti Zutah about the commission of inquiry as they were published in *Kol Ha'ir* (11-3-94):

The chairperson of the commission, Meir Shamgar, as usual, knows exactly when to announce a recess in the proceedings. He dismissed the assembly just when he felt that the stately atmosphere so loved by him was beginning to deteriorate, after the testimony of the border patrol officer from Hebron, Lieutenant Meir Dayan. Dayan said, much to the shock of the commission members, that the Unit Commander in Hebron, Major Meir Kalifi, had given instructions not to shoot at Jews, even if they were shooting directly at another human being.

Sometimes it seems as if the members of the commission have just fallen off the moon - believing there is one justice for both Jews and Arabs alike (Zu'abi: "So he can shoot at others, while it is forbidden for you to shoot at him? You personally heard this?" Shamgar: "You got this as a clear order and it didn't bother you?"). The Supreme Justices have apparently forgotten that there are those among them who signed several rulings calling for a lighter sentence for Jews who throw stones than Arabs.

Palestinian Commissions of Inquiry: Both the Islamic Waqf and the PLO instituted commissions of inquiry into the massacre. Both commissions' work has been impeded by Israel as they have been denied access to the mosque, the site of the massacre, and to other particulars necessary for a complete investigation.

The PLO commission consisted of five lawyers, an ex-mayor of Hebron, four doctors and a religious leader. The commission held a press conference on the one-month anniversary of the massacre. Abd Al-Hafid al-Ashhab, a member of the commission, said that during the massacre soldiers joined Goldstein in shooting the Palestinian worshippers. Although the Palestinian commission does not have evidence of this, the autopsy reports are proof enough. Some eyewitnesses saw at least two soldiers shooting at worshippers coming out of the mosque. The commission does not have an exact number of those killed by Goldstein and those killed by the soldiers. The commission's investigation is continuing as to whether there were other settlers inside the mosque shooting with Goldstein. The main reason for the massacre, al-Ashhab said, is that armed settlers live in Palestinian population centers in the Occupied Territories. 29 people were killed

inside the mosque; another 29 killed were killed by the soldiers' guns during the demonstrations after the massacre. Some eyewitnesses told the commission they saw gunfire inside the mosque coming from more than one direction. He blamed the soldiers stationed outside the mosque for letting Goldstein enter the mosque with an automatic weapon and, according to their reports, seven clips for his weapon.

"The soldiers knew everything about Goldstein," al-Ashhab said. "They received a letter about Goldstein from the Waqf last October complaining about his racist actions." Al-Ashhab said the PLO commission's report will be completed in three weeks time, and will blame the soldiers for refusing to let people use the telephone to summon ambulances. Therefore, medical relief arrived very late and many more people died. "The massacre did not happen by chance, nor from out of the blue, because many attacks have been perpetrated against Palestinians by settlers," Ashhab said.